

Texas Archaeology Month Continues at Fort Hood

By Kristen E. Wenzel, Archaeologist, DPW-ENV-CRM

Most people are familiar with images of archaeologists carefully digging up artifacts to reconstruct the past from television programs and the pages of the National Geographic magazine. It may come as a surprise that excavations do not just take place in faraway places such as Egypt, but right here at Fort Hood at numerous archaeological sites across the installation. Texas Archaeology Awareness Month activities allow everyone a chance to learn about the extensive history of the Central Texas region, which extends back 10,000 years, and the ongoing investigations conducted on the installation.

The earliest inhabitants of the Fort Hood area lived in small groups and moved around the landscape often, hunting animals and gathering wild plants to survive. They made tools from a special kind of stone found across the Installation. Most of the prehistoric archaeology sites at Fort Hood contain stone tools and the debris from their manufacture. On October 12, 2000 Chris Ringstaff, a consulting archaeologist with Prewitt and Associates of Austin, conducted an entertaining and informative flintknapping demonstration. While chipping away at stone with a hammerstone or large antler “billet”, Ringstaff talked about how prehistoric peoples would have made and used stone tools. Completing a small arrowpoint, Ringstaff directed attention to the large amount of debris encircling him and explained how it assists archaeologists in studying sites thousands of years old. Ringstaff’s presentation demonstrated that flintknapping is not just a fun activity, but also a serious experimental approach in archaeological investigations.



Archaeologist Chris Ringstaff demonstrates flintknapping.



Project Director Gemma Mehalchick excavates an archaeology site.

Since early Spring 2000, Prewitt and Associates have been investigating a number of archaeological sites on the Installation as part of the Cultural Resource Management Program. These investigations encompass three different phases. The investigations began with an assessment of a number of rock shelters on the base. These are unique archaeological sites found in natural alcoves or overhangs along bluffs where prehistoric people found shelter from the

weather. The second phase included testing a number of sites to determine the extent of cultural deposits and determine appropriate preservation and protection plans. The third phase, in progress now, involves the excavation of several sites. The data collected from these sites will contribute to the expanding knowledge of the prehistory of the area.

The project director of Fort Hood Investigations, Gemma Mehalchick, presented a summary of these recent investigations as the final event for Texas Archaeology Awareness Month. She spoke October 26, 2000 at a Brown Bag Lunch event sponsored by the Fort Hood CRM branch.

If you are interested in learning about exciting scientific discoveries, you don't have to turn on your television or flip through a magazine. Just drop by the Archaeology Lab to learn about all the interesting archaeology that is all around you. For information on additional events, please contact Ms. Stephanie Bandy, Public Outreach Coordinator, at 288-0846.